

Watershed Events 1999-2002

Smart Growth Legislation: The 119th and 120th Legislatures enacted substantive pieces of legislation setting the stage for much of the State's effort to combat sprawl. Of particular note was 1) the legislative mandate to locate state office buildings and state growth-related capital investments in service centers and designated growth areas in towns with adopted comprehensive plans that are consistent with state goals; and 2) the establishment of preferences in grant and investment programs to assist municipalities with implementing their growth management programs.

Access Management: The Legislature endorsed and the Maine Department of Transportation implemented an access management strategy to control unlimited access to state highways, discourage development sprawl, and protect public investment in roadway capacity.

Beginning with Habitat: This initiative uses geographic information technology to integrate information about wildlife and other natural resources into land use planning and represents a sea-change in the way the State provides information on Maine's natural heritage to towns and other organizations. For the first time, large blocks of undeveloped lands, wildlife corridors, and significant habitat are mapped in relation to development patterns so that they may be incorporated into local planning decisions.

Community Preservation Advisory Committee: Three legislative task forces recommended that there be an ongoing entity to advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Planning Office on matters relating to sprawl. The 120th Legislature established the Community Preservation Advisory Committee, which began meeting in October 2002.

Consolidation of Local Services: As of the close of the evaluation period, a number of conversations around consolidation are taking place. The Maine Municipal Association has an incentive for regionalization in its citizen-initiated tax reform proposal. Legislators have introduced bills around the issue for consideration by the 121st Legislature. Local officials in Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth, and Freeport are discussing how to consolidate public services such as police, dispatch, planning, recreation, legal, and risk management services. Towns in the Penobscot Valley are researching ways to more effectively combine services. The financial and land use impacts of these efforts could be significant.

Extended Communities: To set the stage for improved, integrated transportation and economic development, and natural resource planning by both regional and state agencies, the State Planning Office and the regional councils identified 36 extended communities that define the larger geographic areas within which today's residents live, work, shop, and play. Each extended community includes one or more "urban" service center, surrounded by several communities that are largely suburban in character, and a group of towns that still are predominantly rural in economy, character, and landscape. This typology offers a regional framework within which to explore and, potentially, manage land use, settlement patterns, transportation systems, infrastructure, and natural resource protection.

Governor's Sprawl Sub-cabinet: In 1999, Governor King formed a sub-cabinet working group, which included Commissioners and designees from 11 state agencies, to create a 3-year action plan, *Smart Growth: The Competitive Advantage*, that identifies how state agencies can support smart growth. The sub-cabinet was the impetus for creating the Smart Growth Coordinating Committee (see below).

GrowSmart Maine: More than 60 leaders, representing over 20 Maine conservation, business, and public organizations, as well as interested citizens, joined together in 2002 to create a new statewide organization to organize, challenge, and inspire Maine people to reverse costly sprawling growth trends.

Maine Downtown Center: In 2001, the Legislature created the Maine Downtown Center to provide funding, training, and technical assistance to help communities revitalize their downtowns and to prevent development sprawl by fostering economic development, business growth, job creation, housing revitalization, historic preservation, and cultural enhancement in downtowns. The Center also serves as a clearinghouse for information related to downtown development.

Municipal Investment Trust Fund: The Municipal Investment Trust Fund, which was created in 1993 but not capitalized until 2001, provides low interest loans to help municipalities build infrastructure to support compact patterns of growth. In 2001, the Legislature appropriated \$400,000 to the fund. Voters approved an economic development bond the following year that included an additional \$4 million for the fund.

Service Center Coalition: A statewide coalition of municipal leaders from 44 service center communities has come together to articulate the needs of Maine's traditional hub communities. The coalition promotes the needs of Maine's service center communities to state elected officials and educates citizens about the importance of healthy and thriving service centers.

Smart Growth Coordinating Committee: A standing committee of the Land and Water Resources Council was established in 2002 to coordinate the State's smart growth initiatives and shepherd them to fruition. The committee developed the *Indicators for Livable Communities* report card.

Smart Growth Institute: Approximately 50 professionals and private citizens attended the two-week residential Maine Smart Growth Institute in the fall of 2001 to share the best and most up-to-date information about smart growth. The Institute helped create an understanding of the problems caused by sprawl and establish a network of professionals with common goals to manage the nature of growth across Maine's landscape.

Statewide Geographic Information System (GIS) Library: The 120th Legislature created the Maine Library of Geographic Information to establish policies and standards for the type and form of data to be placed in it and to foster ongoing coordination among public and private GIS stakeholders statewide. Maine voters authorized the first \$2.3 million investment into the Geo-Library in November 2002 and the newly created Geo-Library Board began to meet the same month.